

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 24.-Of Marriage, and Divorce.

I. Marriage is to be between one Man and one Woman: neither is it lawful for any Man to have more then one Wife, nor for any Woman to have more then one Husband; at the same time¹.

Question 1.—*Is marriage to be between one man and one woman?*

Answer.—Yes.Gen. 2:24. Marriage, as ordained by God, is an institution of strict fidelity between one man and one woman. Thus, the Libertines, Sodomites and Whoremongers do grievously err, maintaining that marriage ought to be between those of the same sex or despising that institution altogether. They are confuted because: 1.) It was God who made the race “male and female,” Gen. 1:27. Thereby showing forth the unnaturalness of sodomitic sins, Rom. 1:26,27. 2.) It was God who commanded, “be fruitful and multiply,” Gen. 1:28. Thereby confounding the sodomitic sterility. 3.) It was God who said that it was not good for man to be alone and fashioned an help fitted for him—a woman, Gen. 2:18. Thereby condemning the unnatural affections of the filthy sodomites, Rom. 1:26,27. 4.) It was God who brought the bride to her husband in the first marriage, Gen. 2:22. Thereby condemning those who despise this institution, 1 Cor. 6:9. 5.) It was God’s word declared for the ages that a man should leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, Gen. 2:24. Thereby condemning those that cleave to the harlot, 1 Cor. 6:15,16. 6.) Jesus himself reinforces this divine institution, telling us that his Father instituted marriage, Matt. 19:4-6. 7.) Jesus accepted an invitation to a wedding, in Cana, and there performed the first of many miracles bearing testimony to his divine Sonship, John 2:1-3,11.

Question 2.—*Is it lawful for any man to have more than one wife, or for any woman to have more than one husband, at the same time?*

Answer.—No.Matt. 19:5,6; Prov. 2:17. We speak here not of polygamy which is successive (which is lawful), but of simultaneous (which is sin). Therefore, the Anabaptists and Familists err, maintaining that it is lawful for a Christian, not only to have more wives at the same time than one, but as many as he desires. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) Because the having of two wives, or many wives, is contrary to the first institution of marriage, for the Lord gave Adam one wife only, Gen. 2:23,24; Mal. 2:15; Matt. 19:5. 2.) Because the law of God forbids expressly bigamy, or two wives, Lev. 18:18. 3.) Because the Lord does find fault sharply with polygamy, or many wives, Mal. 2:14,15. 4.) Because Christ says, He that puts away his wife, except in the case of adultery, and marries another commits adultery, Matt. 19:9. But if it were lawful to have at one time more wives than one, he should not be guilty of adultery in marrying another, whether he put away the former wife or not. 5.) Because bigamy and polygamy take away the true peace of a wedded life, as is evident from the examples of Jacob, Gen. 30. And of Elkanah, 1 Sam. 1:6. 6.) Because the invention of bigamy was the device of a wicked man, Lamech, Gen. 4:19. 7.) It is against the nature of the marriage contract, by which

¹Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5,6; Prov. 2:17.

neither has power over his or her own body, 1 Cor. 7:4. Hence he is convicted of injustice and treachery who joins himself to another, Mal. 2:14. 8.) It is against the command of Paul, who wishes each wife to have her own husband, 1 Cor. 7:2. Hence a wife is called an adulteress who becomes the wife of another while her husband is still living, Rom. 7:2,3,9.) It is against the united care of offspring which the end of marriage requires (and which is divided in polygamy).

Question 3.—*What then of the cases of polygamy and laws regulating polygamy in the Old Testament?*

Answer.—These matters ought strictly to be considered: 1.) The legality of polygamy cannot be gathered from the examples of the patriarchs of the Old Testament, who were polygamists and to whom polygamy may have been permitted. We are to be governed by laws and not examples, when clear Scripture precepts contravene (*i.e.* when the examples are not approved). 2.) If it was permitted, it was either permitted by an ethical permission of right through a particular dispensation on account of infirmity because they were still babes, to whom many things are allowed which are denied adults (and this now ceases under the New Testament; Gal. 3:24,25; 5:1; Heb. 5:12-14); or, what is more likely, by a permission of the deed (*i.e.*, through a mere tolerance, not through approbation). These evils were suffered in the judicial law, but neither commanded nor approved in the moral law; Matt. 19:8. So that in this way they might be free from civil punishment in the earthly court, but not likewise from the divine punishment in the court of heaven (from which they had to be freed by the grace of God, by the intervention of repentance, either explicit or at least implicit; Ps. 19:12). Though he give laws to polygamists, Deut. 21:15,16, still he does not on that account approve polygamy; as he gives a law concerning the not bringing the hire of a whore into the house of the Lord, Deut. 23:18, yet he does not approve the hire itself. Likewise, he gives a law concerning the election of a king and yet does not approve of the desire of the people, 1 Sam. 8:6,7. In the body politic, such things were permitted, and punishment not executed, by civil power, but the law of God was the same.